

Dear Ruckel Students, Parents and Community,

Welcome Back! I hope all had an enjoyable summer, and you all were able to enjoy your family and friends. I would like to thank and congratulate everyone for a tremendous 2017-2018 school year. Ruckel received its 19<sup>th</sup> "A" rating and our 18<sup>th</sup> "A" consecutively. It was all due to the hard work you and your teachers put forth, and I am excited about what we will accomplish in 2018-2019.

There will be some changes at Ruckel for 2018. We lost some great teachers to retirement and relocation. We thank those teachers for the impact they had on Ruckel and wish them the best. We are very excited about the new teachers we have hired, and I know they will help us to continue to be one of the best schools in Florida.

We had many academic successes this year. We were among the highest scoring schools for state testing in the Okaloosa County School District. Our achievement score for the Civics end-of-course examination was 89% of our students scored at level 3 or above and 41% of those students scored at level 5. On the Algebra 1 end-of-course examination, we scored 100% with 89% of our students scoring at level 5. This was the highest percentage of students scoring level 5 in the school district, including STEM. Our Geometry students scored at 100% on the EOC with 96% testing at level 5. This was also the highest percentage of level 5s in the district. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, math students had an achievement level of 83% for a gain of +4 over what the same set of students did last year. Seventh grade math students scored at 89% on state testing for an increase of +5 over what the students did last year. Eighth grade math students scored at 89% achievement level for an increase of +6 over what these same students scored last year. Additionally, the hard work our students and teachers put in for science paid off with our 8<sup>th</sup> grade students scoring an 85% achievement level for a +2 increase over what we did last year. In Language Arts, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade had an achievement level of 72% of the students scoring level 3 or higher. In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts, students scored at 74% level 3 or higher. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade students tested at an 80% achievement level for an increase of +1 over what the same set of students did last year.

Besides how well our students did with state testing, I would also like to congratulate them for how well they performed in the classroom. We had a high number of students earning all A and A/B honor roll, and many students increased their learning gains in their studies. Many students were able to earn acceptance into our National Junior Honor Society, and I applaud their success. We also had a strong showing this year in science fair and with our academic teams. Much success was earned in the world of electives and co-curricular classes. We had over seventy students awarded ribbons and awards at the county art show. We also had a large number of students earn All-County and All-State Honors in Band and Chorus. Ruckel earned its highest accelerated achievement score this year because of the successes we had in our technology courses. Web Design had a 100% pass rate on state certification tests, and IT had over a 90% pass rate. Our Digital Photography continued to grow and also earned Ruckel many awards. Both of our foreign languages had a great year. Our number of students taking Spanish grew, and our Italian class was very successful in its first year. The use of STEM practices continued at Ruckel with STEM having another successful year. Our Science teachers also incorporated STEM practices in their classrooms with Pat Martin earning the Air Force Association's Teacher of the Year.

I would also like to thank all of our students and coaches who participated in sports and clubs. Our athletic teams won eight championships and four runner-up trophies with championships in Volleyball,

Girls' Cross-Country, Softball, Girls' and Boys' Tennis, Boys' Track and Girls' and Boys' Swimming. We were the runner-up in Boys' Cross Country, Girls' Soccer, and Baseball and Boys' Golf. Good luck to our Volleyball, Football and Cross Country teams I have seen working so hard this summer for their upcoming season. Our Cheer, Dance, and Majorettes all had a great year and continued to be among the best teams in the nation. Our Dance team earned number one in the nation in Jazz Dance and were state champions. Our cheerleaders earned many awards at the state level and our majorettes received awards at various competitions. We also had great participation and success with Chess Club, Odyssey of the Mind, Student-to-Student Military service club, Multicultural Club, Debate Team, and Academic Teams.

Thank you students and teachers for continuing to make Ruckel a civic and service-minded school. We had another banner year raising over 2,000 items for Caring and Sharing through our National Junior Honor Society. NJHS also made mats for the homeless. We raised over \$2,500 for Change for Children spearheaded by our Multicultural Club. We continued our effort to support and honor our Veterans with our Veterans Day Celebration. We also sent school supplies and made encouragement posters for the students at Stoneman Douglas High School in South Florida.

I also want to thank all who have volunteered at Ruckel over the years. We are a better school when you participate as a volunteer. I am so appreciative of our PTO for the support they have given to our students and teachers. Over the years they have raised many dollars to support our students with technology and classroom needs. One active area of support that we are looking for help is serving as a volunteer in attendance. We could use some attendance volunteers for the front office, copying teacher materials, mentors and proctors. If you cannot actively participate with PTO, please consider giving to their Partners in Education Program which supports the needs of teachers and their students. I have seen many of you in action for our new school year in areas like Band, Chorus and Athletics. As an example, it makes me feel so good every morning when I go to work to see the many volunteers stopping traffic to ensure our Cross Country coaches and students can practice safely. I encourage all of you find a way to volunteer, proctor or mentor at Ruckel this year. We are most appreciative of the services you provide to help make us a better and safer school.

Again, I want to welcome you to the 2018-2019 Ruckel school year. I am so excited about what all of you are going to do to help us have another successful year. I cannot wait to see what our new 6<sup>th</sup> graders and our new students moving to Ruckel do to make Ruckel Middle School even better. I know that it will be exciting.

GO RAMS,

Paul Whiddon